SPECIAL NEEDS DAY CARE:

A DISCUSSION PAPER

Community Support Services Division
Ministry of Social Services
Province of British Columbia

June 1992

93-01705/

This discussion paper has been prepared by the Ministry of Social Services as a framework for public consultation about the future of the Special Needs Day Care Program. This document may be photocopied for free distribution.

For extra copies of this paper, or the background research report, or for further information about how to participate in the consultation process, contact:

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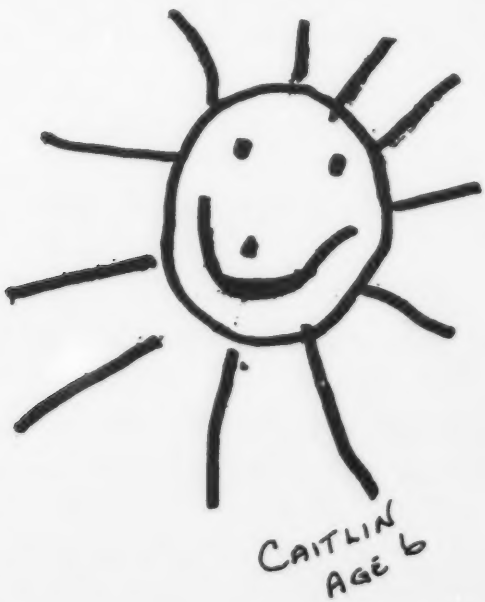


I. *INTRODUCTION:*

Why this Paper

In 1990, the Ministry of Social Services began a review of the Special Needs Day Care Program. This was prompted by concerns raised by parents, service providers, Ministry staff and various interested groups. It began with a committee of Ministry field staff reviewing the issues around how to improve choices for parents and increase the range of community settings available. It then progressed to a research phase, which involved a survey about how the program is currently being delivered. It is now at the stage where consultation with all those affected is needed before any changes are made. The changing needs and circumstances of these stakeholders must be taken into consideration as the program adapts to better meet the demands of families and communities. This paper is designed to offer a framework for consultation. It describes the current situation and presents principles, options and challenges for discussion.

Who are the Stakeholders?

People with an interest in this consultation process might include:

- parents and families of children with special needs;
- service providers such as day cares, preschools or child development centres serving children with special needs;

- community organizations which advocate for and/or provide other services for children with special needs and their families;

- academics or others involved in training people who work in child care settings;

- Ministry staff involved in delivering the program.

- professionals in other Ministries and in the community whose services support or complement those offered by Special Needs Daycare programs.

Others may also be interested and are welcome to participate in the process.

How do people participate?

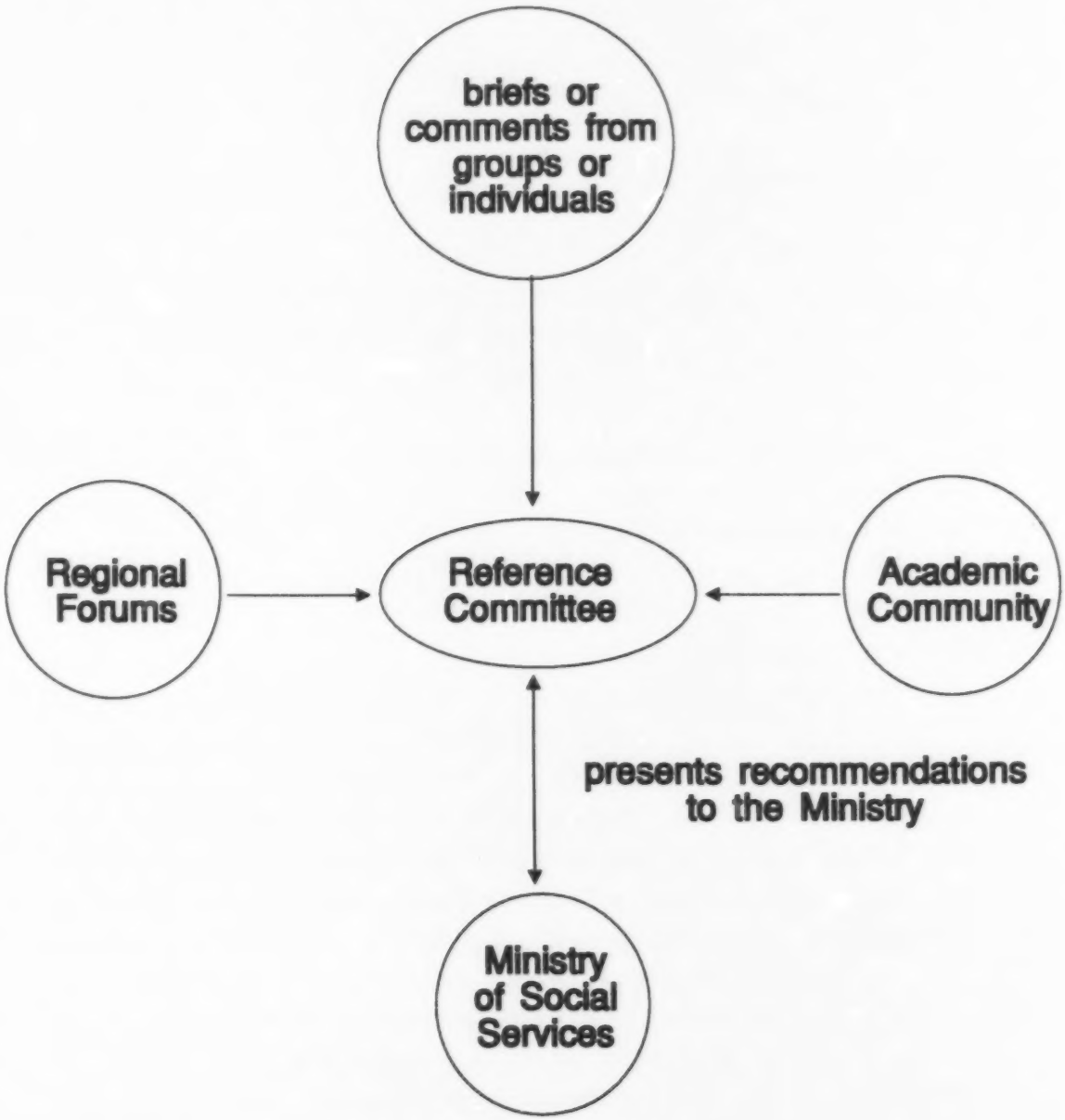
There will be a series of meetings hosted by the Ministry around the Province to receive feedback and provide a forum for discussion. These forums will focus on hearing concerns and recommendations using this paper as a basis for discussion. The Ministry has also appointed a Reference Committee made up of both stakeholders and Ministry staff. This committee will review and analyse the results of the regional forums and develop recommendations on future directions for the program. These will be analysed by the Ministry for both service and financial implications before changes to the present program are made.

Who is on the Reference Committee?

The committee members are:

1. Mr. Brian Taylor - Executive Director, Central Okanagan Child Development Association, Kelowna
2. Ms. Trudy Norton - Exceptional Health Care Project
3. Ms. Elaine McLeod - Child Care Task Force
4. Ms. Wanda Justice - Retired - Vancouver
5. Ms. Jean Faith - Ministry of Health
6. Ms. Dyan Dunsmoor-Farley - Ministry of Women's Equality
7. Ms. Bev Kissinger - Parent - Victoria
8. Ms. Kathleen Smith - Instructor - Douglas College
9. Ms. Donna Riley - Individual Options Project - Mission
10. Ms. Pat Burnip - Parent - Kitimat
11. Ms. Jean Campbell - Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology
12. Ms. Kate Irving - Ministry of Social Services
13. Ms. Nancy McComb, Ministry of Social Services, Castlegar
14. Ms. Leslie Lambert, Ministry of Social Services, Vancouver
15. Ms. Chris Gay, Community Integration Consultant, Victoria
16. Co-Chairs: Ms. Fran Sadler, A/Director, Community Support Services, Ministry of Social Services
    Mr. Doug Woollard, Regional Director Ministry of Social Services
    Alternate: Mr. David Young, Area Manager Ministry of Social Services

PROCESS FOR CONSULTATION



II. WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW:

What does the current program look like?

Over 2,000 children in British Columbia are served by the Special Needs Day Care Program at any one time. The service they receive varies widely; from a few hours a week of nursery school or preschool to a full 8-10 hour day 5 days a week. The types of setting also vary from specialized centres which cover a range of other services such as physiotherapy or occupational therapy, to neighbourhood daycares or preschools.

The annual budget for the program is approximately $20.8 M. (1992-93) and the demand for the service is increasing steadily as more families seek services.

A survey was conducted in the summer of 1991 to get a clear picture of current services. The highlights of the results are:

- Two thirds of the children are boys and the largest percentage are in the 3-5 age group.
- One third of the children require intensive i.e. constant, adult intervention in at least one of four developmental areas (physical/emotional/social/behavioral/cognitive and communication needs).
- One third of the children are in groups with only other children with special needs.
- An additional 42% are in groups with more than 20% other children with special needs.

- The remaining 25% are in groups with fewer than 20% other children with special needs.

- About one quarter of the children are in 1:1 staff/child ratio situations.

- About 17% of the children receive the services of an "itinerant" consultant, in addition to the direct service component.

- Costs for children in settings with fewer than 20% special needs children tend to be lower than for those in other settings.

- Costs for children receiving services of an "itinerant" consultant also tend to be at the lower end of the scale.

- Service providers are generally committed to increased integration, and see a need for more funding and more staff training.

The complete report on this survey research is available from the address inside the front cover.

What is the current policy context?

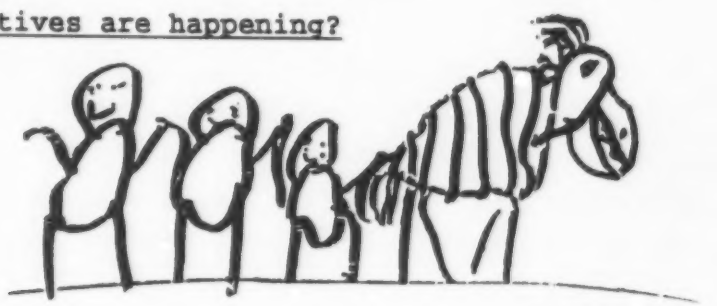
The objective stated in Ministry policy is as follows:

> "The objective of the special needs day care program is to facilitate the optimum participation of children with special needs in day care programs through the provision of extra supports which address the child's specific needs. It is also a family support service enabling parents of special needs children to prepare for and/or maintain employment and financial independence."

This objective implies two important points. One is that the program should meet the needs of children and their families. The second is that integrated community settings are preferred but not required.

Children with a wide range of special needs are eligible for the program. This includes children with mental, physical and behavioral handicaps. There have been some recent changes which have affected the program. In 1990, responsibility for serving preschool children with hearing impairment was transferred to the Ministry of Social Services from the Ministry of Education. These services, which ideally involve a teacher of the hearing impaired, are now being delivered in a variety of ways under the Special Needs Day Care Program. Another recent initiative improves family support services for children with autism. One aspect of these services involves increased use of Special Needs Day Care by these families, and the development of related supports for daycare staff such as training and behavioral consultation.

What community initiatives are happening?



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Over the last few years, some agencies and communities have taken the initiative to design new ways of providing special needs daycare. Some of these initiatives have been in partnership with local offices of the Ministry. Others have been funded by the federal government. Some examples of these innovative new directions are:

Okanagan Neurological Association (Kelowna) (now the Central Okanagan Child Development Association)
In partnership with parents, other service providers in

the community and the Ministry, the ONA has been developing a more fully integrated approach to providing special needs daycare. Many children are now placed in community settings, rather than in the specialized child development centre setting. The ONA then provides training, staff, equipment and expert consultation to assist staff in the community. The ONA role involves individualized planning, determining the nature and level of support required and doing assessments of the children's functional needs together with the caregiver and the parents.

The Ministry's role has become one of monitoring, planning for new services and determining eligibility and funding levels.

This is a practical example of an approach based on "consultation" and "outreach" replacing specialized centre-based services.

"Facilitating Integration Training" (Vancouver)
This is a project operated by the Vancouver Neurological Centre with funding from the federal Child Care Initiatives Fund (CCIF). It has involved community-based research and demonstration training projects designed to increase community integration and the mainstreaming of special needs children. It is also based on a "consultation" approach, but has concentrated on research, identifying issues related to quality and setting out the skills, processes, support services and types of tasks required to make such an approach work. Daycare staff from several centres in the lower mainland have participated in training opportunities and links have been established with similar projects in the United States.

"Individual Options Program" (Mission)

This is another CCIF-funded project designed to improve mainstreaming opportunities. The goal is to provide alternative placements and ongoing support for children with special needs in Mission's child care centres. Individual options program staff assist families and early childhood programs by:

- promoting the value of integration
- providing information to parents
- providing ongoing support to early childhood programs
- assisting with applications for aide funding, when appropriate
- providing information and liaison with existing agencies
- assisting parents with information to meet their child care needs
- assisting with the transition from early childhood programs to the school system
- providing a book and toy lending library

Special Needs Day Care Coordinators (North Vancouver Island)

The North Island is characterized by many small communities and a lack of specialized services outside the major centres. The Ministry has taken the approach of funding children in community day care/preschool spaces, and then contracting with a "Special Needs Daycare Coordinator". These coordinators provide an "itinerant consultant" service to community group day care centres or family day care providers. They provide information, support and coordination of services for a number of children and their service providers.

The survey research tells us that this type of service is being provided in other parts of the province as well.

Exceptional Health Care Project

This project, also funded by CCIF, began with an assessment of the needs of centres and staff serving children with exceptional health care needs in community daycare/preschool settings. Exceptional health care needs require procedures beyond normal care such as assistance with routine cleanliness or minor first aid. Examples include bladder catheterization; emptying, changing and cleaning urinary drainage bags; gastrostomy care, feeding and/or administration of medications; and application of therapeutic dressings. The project is now at the stage of designing recommended guidelines for centres to use in enrolling and providing service to these children. These will cover issues such as individual care plans, training and monitoring. The project is working in coordination with the Ministries of Social Services and Health. Related issues such as liability and interministerial responsibilities are being addressed jointly.

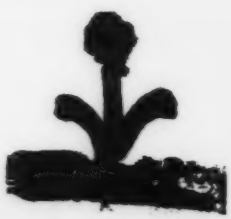
The survey research indicates that there may be several hundred children with such needs currently receiving special needs daycare. Improvements in medical technology and the emphasis on supporting families to keep children at home rather than in hospital likely point to an increase in the numbers in the future.

What other programs and initiatives may affect the delivery of Special Needs Daycare?

Many families who use Special Needs Daycare also use other support services. Some of these are also provided by the Ministry of Social Services, such as the Infant Development Programs or respite care. Others may be provided through the Ministry of Health's Early Intervention Program which funds the provision of speech therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy in agencies throughout the province. Many of the children receiving these therapies also receive Special Needs Daycare, sometimes from the same agency, sometimes through another service provider. Some agencies are putting more emphasis on "outreach" services where therapists work in the community as part of a team involved with the family. A more "family-centred" approach is being promoted by the Ministry of Health.

The overall child care picture in British Columbia is also going through change. The 1991 report of the Task Force on Daycare identified a range of issues which affect the whole child care sector including those services for children with special needs. Issues included the need for:

- new ways of funding child care
- changes to licensing requirements
- improved coordination of child care funding and supports from government
- enhanced training for Early Childhood Educators, including a "special needs" component in their curriculum.



In April of this year the Ministry of Women's Equality announced a new B. C. Child Care strategy aimed at stabilizing and expanding the availability of safe, affordable care to better meet the needs of working families, single parents and local communities. The main initiatives in this strategy are:

- a $2.5 million infusion into infant and toddler child care.

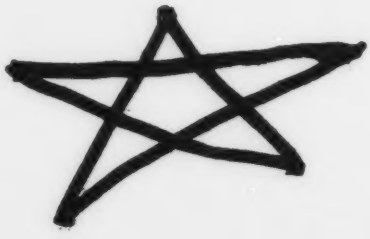
- the creation of more spaces in family day care through a $1.5 million expansion of the Day Care Support Program. This initiative will also improve referral systems to help more families find the child care services they need.

- the establishment of more non-profit child care centres through the creation of a $2.75 million Child Care Expansion Program.

- almost $1 million in support to communities to plan for and develop child care options that meet local needs.

- The creation of a Provincial Child Care Council to give B.C. communities a greater say over future child care initiatives, and the establishment of an Aboriginal Child Care Working Committee to better meet the needs of aboriginal people.

There will be several ministries involved in these initiatives, including Social Services, Health, Advanced Education, Training and Technology and Education. Overall coordination will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Women's Equality.



What is happening outside British Columbia?

Many parents and child care advocates are demanding improved choices and mainstreaming opportunities. In both Canada and the United States, a variety of approaches are being tried. While many of these programs are too recent to have been evaluated, the literature about both the Canadian and American experience can give some useful guidance:

- A degree of "direct service" will always be required for service providers working with some children - especially those with severe physical or behavioral handicaps.
- To be successful, those providing support and training to day care staff require interpersonal and team-building skills as part of their basic training program.
- Active planning and coordination with all players is necessary to make mainstreaming work. This includes families, agency staff, early childhood educators, community members and allied professionals such as therapists and teachers.
- The single largest barrier to mainstreaming in daycare settings seems to be attitudes of staff and others.

An organization called "Specialink" has been set up to provide research, advocacy and information-sharing in order to improve the quality and quantity of daycare mainstreaming in Canada. It is based in Nova Scotia, funded by the federal CCIF, and has an advisory committee with representation across the country.

The children and families using Special Needs Daycare have changing needs and demands. So do the individuals and centres which provide the service on behalf of the Ministry. This program is undergoing many changes as it adapts to better serve those who use it. The next section of the paper describes some possible future directions and options.

III. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

While it is clear that the Special Needs Daycare Program needs to adapt, it is not clear exactly what changes are needed, and how they will fit into the present situation described in the previous section of this paper. This paper will now put forward a possible framework for discussing changes as follows:

	SERVICE	KEY ISSUES
	DELIVERY	AND
PRINCIPLES >>>>>>>>>>>>	OPTIONS >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	CHALLENGES

It is not intended to provide answers - only ideas and questions to promote discussion. The answers will begin to take shape through the regional meetings and the work of the Reference Committee.

What principles should guide the program?

In line with the direction in which Government is moving with services to adults with mental handicaps, and in keeping with a "value-based" approach, the Ministry would like to strengthen the guiding principles under which services such as Special Needs Daycare are offered. In order to be useful, these principles need to be formed on the basis of consensus among the major stakeholders - including families, agencies and government. As a basis for discussion, the following are suggested as principles upon which changes to the program could be made:

1. Community Integration and Mainstreaming
   Children will be served and supported in a "mainstreamed" (see glossary) environment which meets their needs and those of their families.

2. Supporting Families

Family support recognizes that the family is often the most important and sometimes the only constant factor in the life of an individual. Families know each other in a special way which no agency or professional can match. Family support involves respecting the history of the family, and seeks to build upon the strengths and stability that families can offer. As the primary caregivers of their children, families know their children's needs well. Parents are essential members of a team involved with a child and should be supported in that role. They should have options to choose from in meeting the needs of their child.

3. Teamwork

All those who are involved with a child - families, volunteers and professionals - should work as a team. A collaborative approach will best serve the child's needs in the context of his or her family and community.

4. Continuum of Service

Early intervention and service is optimal for children and families. Coordination and planning is needed to manage key "transitions" (such as daycare to school) and to ensure a continuum of appropriate services is provided.

5. Respect for the Individual

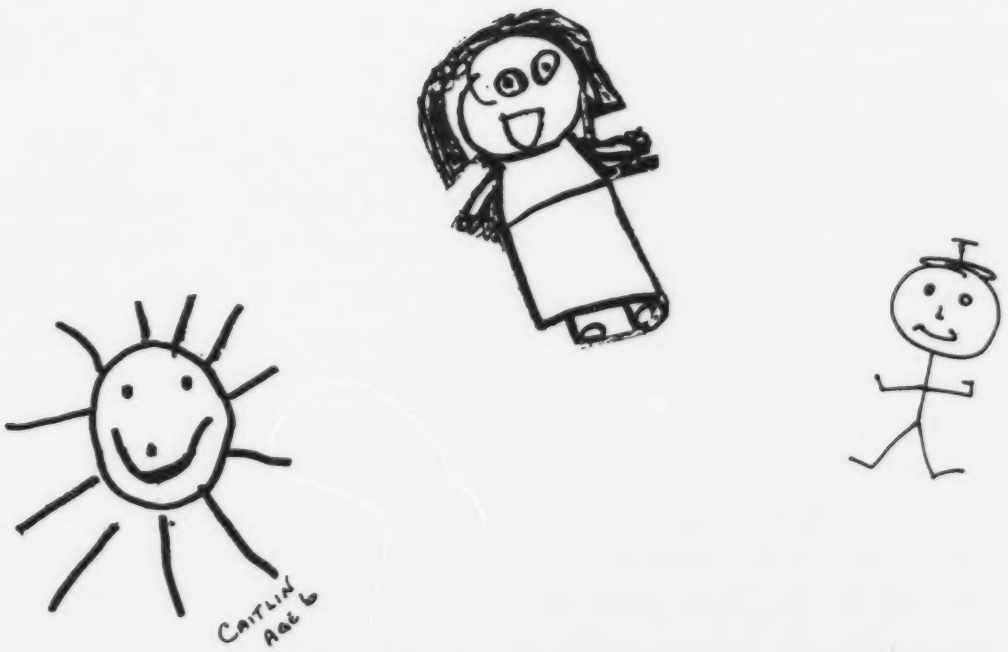
Each child and family member is a unique individual and should be treated with respect and dignity. Planning should focus on the individual needs of the child in the context of the family and community. Services can only be offered. Families have the right to accept or reject that offer and differences of opinion must be respected.

6. Quality of Service

Each child and family is entitled to quality service in terms of the care they receive from direct caregivers and the support they receive from other members of the planning team.

What do you think about these principles?

What should be changed, added or deleted?



What are some options for changing the way Special Needs Daycare is delivered?

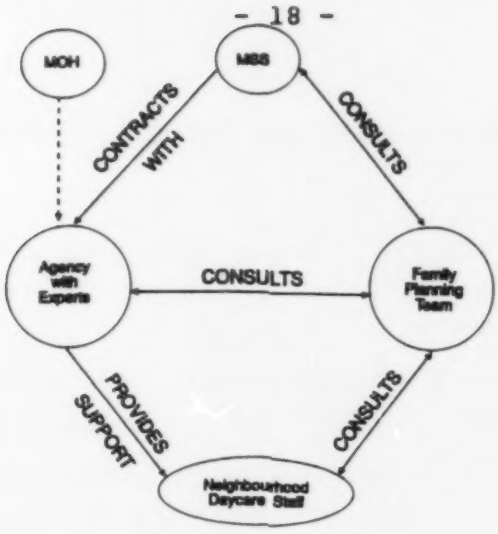
There are several different ways in which the program could be changed in terms of how it is designed and delivered. Some options are presented here for discussion - each one puts a higher emphasis or value on one or more of the suggested principles. There may be other options as well. At the end of this "Options" section you will have an opportunity to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each one.

1. **Supported Approach to "Mainstreaming"**

This option would be similar to a number of the initiatives described in the first part of this paper. It would involve placing children in community spaces and providing the supports needed to enable group day care staff or family daycare providers to best serve the children and integrate them into the program and activities being provided. Parents would have more choices about keeping their children in their neighbourhoods. The kinds of supports needed by the staff might include:

- general training in work with children with special needs and in the "how-to's" of mainstreaming
- assessment of a child's functional needs and development of an individual plan including goals, strategies, etc.
- child-specific training to meet a child's individual needs
- access to a consultant to answer questions, evaluate and redesign plans etc. on an ongoing basis
- participation in a "team" planning effort
- professional therapy services will be available to the neighborhood daycare, e.g. speech, physio, occupational
- a one to one support worker where needed.

An agency would be funded to provide this expertise and support. It might work as follows:



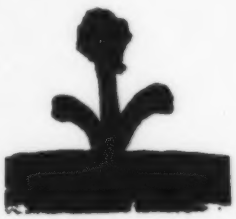
The Ministry would fund the agency, monitor the service, determine eligibility and work with the family around any other services needed. Other team members, such as therapists, would be involved under the coordinating umbrella of the agency.

This option might improve parent choices and mainstreaming opportunities. However, it might disrupt some of the more specialized services now being provided, and cause difficulties for centres that have never worked with children with special needs.

2. <u>A "menu" approach to mainstreaming</u>

The "menu" approach would see a variety of day care options available in a community. The "menu" might include:

- a supported mainstream day care service as described in Option 1
- a specialized service setting
- non special needs children integrated into a specialized daycare service setting
- in-own-home supported daycare



The full range of services may be available in one community and not another. This approach would provide for increased parent choice, and would have the flexibility to adapt to community needs and resources.

Although the "menu" approach may offer families more choices it may tend to unintentionally maintain the "status quo". It might also create expectations which can't be met due to lack of resources.

3. Maintain current system

The current system, with the exception of the types of initiatives described earlier in the paper, involves for the most part, the Ministry funding extra staffing for a child with special needs. This is done either by contracting for a certain number of spaces from a centre, or by purchasing individual spaces by "authorization" usually in family daycares.

This system could be continued, and initiatives could be funded as "pilot projects" for several years and then be reassessed.

This option would ensure that innovative approaches would be evaluated before being generalized around the province. However, it would not address the concerns about improving mainstreaming opportunities.

These are just three options. Please use the following chart to assess them and to come up with others. Creative ideas are welcome!

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	COMMENTS
Option #1 - Supported Approach			
Option #2 - Menu Approach			
Option #3 - Status Quo			
Option #4 - Alternative Approach			

After filling out this chart, try the following questions.....

Would some parts of B.C. be better served by one option than another?

Are any of the principles better reflected by one option than another?

Do you think these options are consistent with the principles?

Do you think the principles should be changed?

What are the key issues and challenges which need to be addressed?

Principles and service delivery approaches (as described in the Options section) only define the broad parameters of the program. Regardless of what general approach seems most acceptable, there are many more issues which must be addressed. These challenges are more specific, and in some ways more difficult. They require

discussion and then action regardless of which option for service delivery is chosen. This section will present each issue or challenge.

1. Objectives of Special Needs Daycare

- There is confusion now about whether a full 8-10 hour daycare service or a shorter, more specialized program is optimal, and what length of program government should fund.

- should the primary objective be to meet the developmental needs of the child, or the needs of the family to maintain independence?

For your reference the current objective as described in Ministry policy is on page 6 of this paper.

2. Appropriate Role for Ministry Staff

Ministry staff play different roles in communities and come from a variety of backgrounds. What is the appropriate role? Does it require an intense involvement with early childhood and special needs issues? Or is it a more general one of purchasing and monitoring service and then facilitating a team approach?

3. Integration with other programs and services

Some of the other programs with which families may be involved have been described earlier in this paper. How can coordination and planning be improved so that transitions are smoother, and services are better integrated? Would a "family service planning" process help? If so, who should "lead" it, and who should participate in it?

4. Children with Exceptional Health Care Needs

Given that the participation in child care settings of children with exceptional health care needs seems to be increasing, what approach is needed to ensure their safe involvement in daycare/preschool programs? Is the system now in place for school-age children working? Could it be transferred to preschool settings? What about children in after-school care?

5. **Eligibility**

Which children should be eligible for special needs daycare and what should the screening process be? Should there be a standardized assessment approach used to determine the nature and the amount of service to be provided? Should there be an inter-disciplinary approach involving other "team" members?

6. **Transportation**

Currently, the provisions of the GAIN Act and Regulations preclude the Ministry from paying for transportation to and from daycare settings. This can cause problems for families in some communities. Would a change in the service delivery approach lessen the demand to transport children? Should this responsibility rest with another agency? Should a portion of funding now spent on programs be used to cover transportation costs? Is this a family responsibility? Should such a service be income tested?

7. **Sharing Costs**

Current policy states that parents are not to be income-tested for Special Needs Daycare, and are not expected to contribute to the cost of their child's program. However,

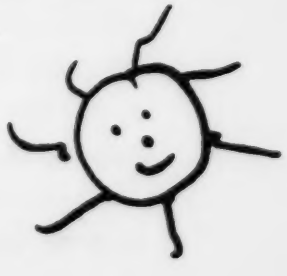
the survey research indicates that this policy may not be consistently applied around the province. It also reveals that some families are using a second type of care, which may not be considered "specialized", for which they are income-tested as are all parents who apply for a subsidy to assist with the costs of their regular daycare service.

There are those who feel that the Ministry should only cover the extra costs incurred by a daycare service provider due to the special needs of the child, and that parents should pay the basic day care fee where able. Others feel that the extra burden of caring for a child with special needs warrants the Ministry paying the full cost. What do you think?

8. Impacts on Children Without Special Needs

There may be concern about placing more children with special needs in community spaces. People may fear that children without special needs will receive less attention as a result. Others would welcome more mainstreaming, as long as staffing, training and other supports are adequate.

Many areas face a shortage of community daycare spaces, and there are fears that "moving" children with special needs into existing spaces will mean even fewer spaces for children without special needs.



What do you think about these concerns or fears?

9. Impacts on Existing Specialized Centres

There are specialized child care centres which rely on special needs daycare contracts with the Ministry for a portion of their funding. Increased parent choice and flexibility about placing children in other community settings may result in less funding for these existing centres.

What do you think the impacts of changes to the present program might be on these existing specialized centres? Do you have suggestions for ways they might meet expenses?

9. Improving Flexibility

The length, nature and intensity of special needs daycare programs vary widely across B.C. While this means that families are receiving different types and levels of service, it also means that services appropriate to particular communities can be developed. For example, a Ministry-funded full day program or after-school care may be appropriate in communities where families are predominantly in the labour force or in school. A preschool or nursery school program may be appropriate for families where one

parent is able to care for the child(ren) during the day. Should the funding obligations of the Ministry differ in these two types of situations? Are there other ways to accommodate the need for flexibility while being fair to all families?

10. Program Standards

At the moment, most of the minimum standards for special needs daycare programs, such as staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, physical space requirements etc. are set by the Community Care Facility Act and Child Care Regulations. These are generic standards, most of which apply to any child care setting, not just those serving children with special needs.

The policy and contracts of the Ministry of Social Services details specific elements of the special needs programs being provided either by agencies or by family daycare providers. Should there be standards for:

- behavioral management techniques?
- child-specific training?
- baseline levels of support for initiatives such as mainstreaming?
- qualifications of caregivers in unlicensed settings?
- others?

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11. Staff Training

The attitudes and training of early childhood educators involved in integrating children with special needs are key to the success of such efforts. Currently, the basic Early Childhood Education (ECE) program offered by colleges in B.C. is 10 months long and has no curriculum about special needs or mainstreaming. A "post-basic" certificate in Special Needs is available. Training for "consultants" or "resource teachers" is not available in B.C., and in fact is available in only a couple of places in Canada. For example, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in Toronto is now offering a 4 year program to train "resource teachers" in the supported approach to mainstreaming.

There is considerable discussion within the daycare community about changes to the ECE program in B.C. Changes could include lengthening it to 2 years, and including special needs as part of a more "inclusive" approach. Others would also like to see changes in the way therapists are trained. Inclusion, outreach and teamwork may receive more emphasis in those training programs as well.

What, if any, changes do you feel are needed in training?

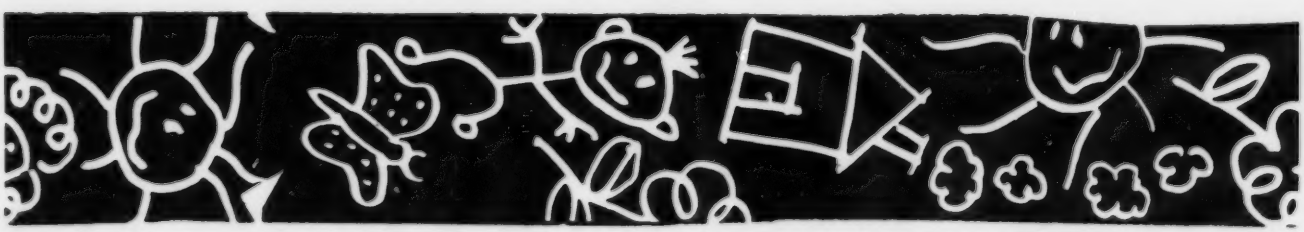
12. <u>Other key issues or challenges.....</u>

What other concerns need to be addressed? What positive suggestions do you have for addressing them?

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to provide a framework to be used as a basis of discussion. Subsequent debate will take place at Regional meetings, among stakeholders on a less formal basis, and within the Reference Committee.

The Reference Committee will review the results of the Regional meetings and any written comments or briefs received. It will then endeavour to find a balance among various points of view and provide the Ministry with recommendations as to how the SNDC program can best adapt to the changing needs and circumstances of B.C. families and children. We look forward to hearing your ideas and suggestions and see this as an important and desirable part of this process.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Consensus	When a general agreement is reached within a group.
Continuum of service	The uninterrupted provision of service adapted to meet the changing needs of the individual.
Functional needs	Those skills and abilities necessary for an individual to have in order to function appropriately within the community.
Integration	The mixing of handicapped and nonhandicapped children in developmental day care, usually on a 50/50 basis. This is sometimes called "reverse mainstreaming".
Itinerant consultant	An individual with professional expertise whose services are provided on a site-specific basis.
Mainstreaming	The placement of children with handicaps into developmental day care programs with normally developing children, at approximately the ratio occurring in the general population. This usually implies no more than 20% handicapped children.
Outreach	A service which is the responsibility of one agency is made available to others on a visitation basis.

Stakeholders	**Any individual, agency or organization with an interest in a given program/policy.**
Transitions	**Passage from one stage to another such as from preschool to Kindergarten.**

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Victoria, 1992